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Authority: EO 13526
DIA FOIA & Declassification Services Offices
Date: *Oct 17, 2018*

DIADIN 273-2A
AS OF 2224 EDT
30 SEP 79

ARGENTINA: ARMY UNREST ERUPTS. (U)

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ AN ATTEMPT BY III ARMY CORPS COMMANDER MAJ GEN MENENDEZ TO TOPPLE ARMY COMMANDER IN CHIEF VIOLA THIS WEEKEND FAILED TO RALLY SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AND INSTEAD RESULTED IN THE COMMANDER'S AND DEPUTY COMMANDER'S REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. ALTHOUGH MENENDEZ' CHALLENGE FELL SHORT OF ITS MARK, THE SHORT-LIVED AND UNSUCCESSFUL REBELLION UNDERSCORES THE SERIOUS MILITARY DISCONTENT THAT HAS RECENTLY SURFACED AS A RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND TERRORIST-RELATED ISSUES.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ IN A PREDAWN COMMUNIQUE ON 29 SEPTEMBER, MENENDEZ CALLED FOR VIOLA'S IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION, CITING THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAST WEEK'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE SUPREME COURT RULING TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONER JACOBO TIMERMAN AND LAST WEEK'S TERRORIST BOMBING OF ECONOMY SECRETARY KLEIN'S RESIDENCE. THE VISIT LAST MONTH BY THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE CONTINUING CLIMB OF THE COUNTRY'S INFLATION RATE ALSO HEAVILY CONTRIBUTED TO MENENDEZ' CHALLENGE. THE ARMY COMMANDERS OF THE OTHER THREE CORPS OPTED FOR UNITY WITH VIOLA AND APPARENTLY ONLY TWO III CORPS UNITS SUPPORTED THE COMMANDER'S ACTION. VIOLA RESPONDED FIRMLY TO THE CORPS COMMANDER'S ACTION, REPLACING HIM WITH V ARMY CORPS COMMANDER VAQUERO. THE ATMOSPHERE TENSED, HOWEVER, ON THE AFTERNOON OF THE 29TH IN CORDOBA, III CORPS HEADQUARTERS, WHEN LOYALIST PARATROOPERS WERE SENT TO THE AREA AFTER MENENDEZ REFUSED TO COMPLY WITH VIOLA'S REMOVAL COMMAND. THE SITUATION NORMALIZED AFTER MENENDEZ FLEW TO BUENOS AIRES ON THE 30TH TO CONFER WITH VIOLA, AND BY AFTERNOON THE TROOPS WERE REPORTEDLY BEING PULLED BACKED.

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~~(C/NOFORN)~~ MENENDEZ, ALONG WITH ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF SUAREZ MASON, HAS BEEN A HARDLINE IRRITANT TO VIOLA ON SUCH ISSUES AS THE COUNTRY'S HUMAN RIGHTS STANCE AND BEAGLE CHANNEL CONTROVERSY WITH CHILE. LIKE MENENDEZ, SUAREZ MASON AND OTHER HARDLINE GENERALS WERE INCENSED OVER NEWSPAPER EDITOR TIMERMAN'S RELEASE. THE RECENT INFILTRATION OF SEVERAL MONTONERO TERRORISTS BACK INTO ARGENTINA AND THEIR ATTACK ON KLEIN'S RESIDENCE SERVED TO EXACERBATE THE DIVISIVENESS AND IMPELLED MENENDEZ' REBELLIOUS CHALLENGE. IT APPEARS MENENDEZ' ACTION WAS A UNILATERAL ATTEMPT AND THERE WAS NO PRIOR CONSULTATION WITH OTHER COMMANDERS.

~~(C/NOFORN)~~ VIOLA'S SHOW OF FORCE AND LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE STRENGTHENED HIS POSITION FOR NOW; BUT THE WEEKEND'S EXCITEMENT WILL FURTHER COMPLICATE THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF SUCCESSION ISSUE AND THE ISSUE OF HIS CANDIDACY TO REPLACE PRESIDENT VIDELA IN MARCH OF 1981. VIOLA IS NOW SCHEDULED TO RESIGN AS COMMANDER OF THE ARMY IN DECEMBER. RECENT EVENTS MAY DELAY HIS RESIGNATION, HOWEVER, PUTTING OFF THE CHOICE OF HIS REPLACEMENT, WHICH HAD ALREADY BECOME A THORNY INTERNAL PROBLEM FOR THE ARMY. ~~(DECL 29 SEP 85)~~

PREPARED BY: (b)(3):10 USC 424

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